

## **Request for Information: Improving the Senior Nutrition Program**

Aging & Disability Services

02/06/2003

### **I. Background**

Aging & Disability Services (ADS), a division of the City of Seattle's Human Services Department, contracts with local providers to administer a "senior nutrition program" for older adults. There are over 50 "congregate" meal sites in King County. Most provide lunch five times a week, though a few offer dinner and/or breakfast.\*

The program offers more than just a meal – nutrition, socialization, and education are vital components. Approximately 12,000 King County elders received over 300,000 meals in 2001. Funding comes from three primary sources: Title III of the Older Americans Act, a USDA per-meal reimbursement, and donations from participants.

### **II. Purpose of this Request for Information (RFI)**

Participation in the senior nutrition program has been steadily declining, not just in King County but nationwide. Reasons include difficulty in finding transportation, the quality of the food, and lack of awareness. There are also doubts about the program's attractiveness for retiring baby boomers. (However, it should be noted that some sites are flourishing, particularly those serving ethnic populations and offering freshly prepared meals.)

ADS views this as an opportunity to explore new directions for the program. Through this RFI we are looking for creative ideas from the community that will help us increase participation in the senior nutrition program and improve nutrition and physical activity outcomes. At this stage we welcome all serious suggestions, and hope to hear from a wide range of organizations. If you have an idea to share, **please respond to this RFI by February 28.**

### **III. Target population**

The regulations define the target population as persons 60 and over who are unable to prepare meals for themselves. There are also "vulnerability criteria," but besides age there are no strict eligibility requirements for participating in the program. Meals are free for eligible persons, but sites do collect a "suggested donation" of \$1.50 - \$3. The program currently recovers about \$1.70 per meal through participant donations.

### **IV. Ideas for improving the senior nutrition program**

The following are some ideas for improving the program you might consider in your response to this RFI, but please do not feel limited by them:

- Incorporate local and/or organic produce
- Incorporate community gardening activities
- Increase intergenerational collaboration
- Create a welcoming, non-institutional atmosphere (similar to what the Eden Alternative is doing for long term care, see: [www.edenalt.com/10.htm](http://www.edenalt.com/10.htm))
- Develop new marketing/outreach strategies
- Involve new types of collaborations with individuals/organizations not previously associated with the meal program (e.g., local farmers).
- Offer fewer meal times per week and concentrate on food quality over quantity.

*\* There is also a home-delivered meal component to this program, but it is not the subject of this Request.*

## V. Response

We seek a wide range of ideas, and want to keep this process as simple as possible. **You may respond to this RFI by mail, fax, email or phone -- whichever you prefer (contact info below).** We do not expect detailed responses.

We may call you for additional information. You must be willing to have your ideas posted on ADS' website, which we hope will increase collaboration. There is also a chance we will be able to fund a small number of these ideas on a demonstration basis, though we can't promise anything at this point. Some ideas may be incorporated into the next Request for Proposals (RFP) for the program, due out this summer. We welcome responses from current providers, but it is not a prerequisite for responding to the RFP.

The questions below are to help guide your thinking – you do not need to answer each one:

1. Design: Does your idea involve a new site or collaboration with an existing site? How would it operate? What other organizations might be involved?
2. Satisfaction: How will your idea increase participant satisfaction? How will it increase participation?
3. Geography: What geographic area will be served?
4. Cost: What will be the per-meal cost of your idea? How much will be required for food, transportation, marketing and administration?
5. Scale: How many eligible persons will you serve per week? How many meals?
6. Population: How will your idea help ADS reach the target population defined in section III?
7. Community need: How your idea address local community needs? Will it help ADS serve people of color, isolated rural elderly, or other underserved populations?
8. Experience: Describe your agency's experience in serving older persons, food service/distribution or social marketing.
9. Other: This is your opportunity to highlight other creative aspects of your idea/plan.

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| <p>Please respond by Feb. 28 to: Douglas Ricker<br/>Phone: 206-615-0992<br/>Fax: 206-684-0689<br/>Email: <a href="mailto:doug.ricker@seattle.gov">doug.ricker@seattle.gov</a><br/>Address: 618 Second Ave, Suite 1020<br/>Seattle, WA 98104</p> |
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